

"This bill is an urgent reversal from eight years of ignoring the crisis. Between 2000 and 2008, health insurance premiums doubled, insurance company profits quadrupled, and an additional 6 million Americans became uninsured. As a result, the leading cause of personal bankruptcy today is unpaid medical bills. Without action, these trends will grow worse," Rep. Israel said. "These are the middle class families and businesses that have always expanded our economy. But rising health costs and insecurity have undermined the middle class. This bill will provide them with the basic security they need to do what they've always done: build our economy." Washington, DC— On Sunday, Rep. Steve Israel (D – Huntington) submitted the following statement in support of health care reform to the Congressional Record. MADAME SPEAKER, I rise in support of this bill for one fundamental reason. It is simply the right thing to do. Not for my Party, not for the President, not for the Speaker, not for me. But for the people I represent. The middle class and working families; the backbones of our economy -- small businesses -- challenged by rising health costs.

Few debates have been as long and as passionate as this one. Since last August I have heard the strong voices on both sides of this issue. I have listened to the angry chants of opponents of the bill at Town Hall meetings. I have read the mail from people who insist this is a march towards socialism, that it is a dangerous experiment, that it involves government death panels who will deny senior citizens the life-saving health care they need. I have watched protesters march outside my district office on Long Island. I have seen the repugnant signs here in Washington comparing health care to the Holocaust.

I have seen and heard it all. But I have also heard others. They are the average Long Islanders -- not rich, not poor, but usually somewhere in between -- who live in quiet desperation and concern.

The small business owner on Long Island who told me he just received a 22 percent increase in health insurance premiums and agonizes at the prospect of either scaling back the care he provides his workers or scaling back the workers he pays. Under this bill, his business will receive a tax credit to help him provide insurance to his workers. And he will be able to shop for competitive rates and services in a new market-driven "Health Insurance Exchange."

The woman who thought health care worked pretty well for her, until her daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer. She's been forced to deal with high medical costs to care for her

daughter. But, under this bill, she will not have to worry about an insurance company that refuses to pay for her chemotherapy.

The middle class family with two kids just out of college who are having trouble finding a job that provides health insurance. Under this bill, those young adults can get coverage on their parents' plans until they turn 26.

The retired plumber on the block where I live. One day he came to my house. I thought he wanted to debate this bill with me. Instead, he said: "I wish you would pass this now. Don't these people know that if they lose their jobs they lose their health care?"

And just yesterday, Madame Speaker, a small business owner called me with concerns and plentiful questions about the legislation we will vote on today. After I explained it, he said: "There's been too much confusion about this bill. I wish it had been explained."

He is right. This bill has changed in over a year of debate. Sometimes in an effort to accept bipartisan recommendations. Sometimes to reduce its cost. While one side has had the responsibility to improve the bill, the other side has taken the opportunity to brand it with mischaracterizations. But now the ink is dry, Madame Speaker. And the dry ink of this bill represents the best hope to protect the middle class and working families I represent. The small business owner in East Northport who now has a level playing field when shopping for insurance. The family in Sayville who can now keep a child insured until the age of twenty-six. The senior in Deer Park whose drug costs will be covered. The accountant in Huntington who lost his job but will be able to shop for affordable health care.

This bill will improve coverage for 485,000 of my constituents with coverage through their employer, give tax credits to as many as 81,000 families and 21,000 small businesses to make health care affordable in my district, and extend coverage to 29,000 uninsured residents of the towns I represent.

This bill will reduce our debt. Yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office certified that the bill is fully funded and will actually reduce federal deficits by \$143 billion in the first ten years and over a trillion dollars in the next ten.

This bill is an urgent reversal from eight years of ignoring the crisis. Between 2000 and 2008, health insurance premiums doubled, insurance company profits quadrupled, and an additional 6 million Americans became uninsured. As a result, the leading cause of personal bankruptcy today is unpaid medical bills. Without action, these trends will grow worse.

These are the middle class families and businesses that have always expanded our economy. But rising health costs and insecurity have undermined the middle class. This bill will provide them with the basic security they need to do what they've always done: build our economy.

This vote is no different than the 1965 vote for Medicare. Back then, when one-quarter of American seniors were living in poverty and wracked with un-payable medical bills, there were loud voices that said, "do nothing" and "start over" and "vote no." Public opinion was skeptical

then. Had I been in Congress in 1965, and the choice was voting for Medicare and risking my seat, or voting against Medicare and saving my seat, I would have voted for Medicare. It became the back bone of economic security for our senior citizens and helped build a middle class with economic security. This is no different. No less necessary. No less historic.